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Seventh report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Burundi

I. Introduction

1. By resolution 1650 (2005) of 21 December 2005, the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB) until 1 July 2006. In the same resolution, the Council requested me to continue consultations with the Government of Burundi to determine the modalities for implementing a gradual disengagement of the United Nations peacekeeping presence and an adjustment to the mandate. In my March 2006 report (S/2006/163), I outlined recommendations for the completion of ONUB's mandate by 31 December and provided a drawdown proposal for the mission's military and civilian components. I also indicated the need to continue assessing the situation as well as collaborative planning with the Government regarding the future United Nations presence in Burundi. The present report describes the results of those consultations and an update on progress in the peace consolidation process.

II. Political developments

2. During the reporting period, the Government continued the implementation of governance reforms and institution-building. The Parliament worked towards the adoption of new legislation related to good governance and democratic reform, and took further measures towards combating corruption. Despite the emergence of internal differences within the two largest parties, Conseil national pour la défense de la démocracie-Forces pour la défense de la démocracie (CNDD-FDD) and Front pour la démocracie au Burundi (FRODEBU), general political stability was maintained and overall consensus was sustained within the Government regarding its priorities.

3. On 17 March, President Pierre Nkurunziza appointed new Ministers to the Good Governance as well as the Interior and Public Security portfolios. Subsequently, 17 ambassadorial appointments were announced, along with the appointment of senior magistrates and judicial officials.

4. The Parliament continued its second session and adopted several important bills, including legislation establishing the framework for the creation of the National Commission on Land and Property. The National Assembly also adopted

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two laws on the privatization of public enterprises and community public services. The Commission on Political Prisoners completed its work with the issuance of a third decree releasing 1,846 prisoners and bringing the total to 4,330 since January.

5. On 24 March, FRODEBU President Léonce Ngendakumana issued a declaration stating his party's intention to withdraw from the Government on the grounds that it had failed to adequately consult with his party. Following the declaration, the three FRODEBU Ministers publicly stated that they had not been consulted on the withdrawal decision and would therefore remain in the Government. Subsequently, 14 of the 30 FRODEBU Members of Parliament called upon Mr. Ngendakumana to consult members before such decisions are taken.

6. Tension also emerged within CNDD-FDD. During a press conference on 10 April, CNDD-FDD Member of Parliament Mathias Basabose resigned from a post within the party after being accused of corruption and disagreements with the party's president, Hussein Rajabu. Mr. Basabose was subsequently expelled from CNDD-FDD and lost his parliamentary immunity. Following the growing tension within CNDD-FDD, FRODEBU, Unité pour le progrès national (UPRONA) and CNDD issued statements alleging government corruption and requesting the establishment of a commission of inquiry.

7. On 15 April, during a second press conference by Mr. Basabose, the Burundi National Police and Service National de Renseignements elements surrounded his residence. After being confined for several hours, journalists were instructed to hand over their records of the press conference to the security services before being permitted to leave the premises. Following criticism from several political parties and civil society and public statements in defence of freedom of the press issued by international stakeholders, including ONUB, the Minister of Communications, Karenga Ramadhan, announced the Government's condemnation of the incident. Presidential Spokesperson Hafsa Mossi also declared that the President had not instructed Burundi National Police to carry out the operation. On 19 May, further divergences within CNDD-FDD emerged when the Second Vice-President was reportedly requested to return to Bujumbura during the course of a visit to the United States and Belgium.

8. In the meantime, CNDD-FDD held an extraordinary party congress on 3 June. Statements reportedly made during the Congress criticizing opposition political parties, the national media, and civil society sparked further public debate. Seven political parties subsequently issued a joint communiqué condemning the statements allegedly made by CNDD-FDD members.

9. The main political parties released a number of additional declarations and media statements during the reporting period, criticizing the Government regarding the human rights and security situation and delays in negotiations with FNL, and calling for additional measures to stem corruption.

Burundi Partners' Forum

10. ONUB continued to chair the bi-monthly meetings of the 19-member Burundi Partners' Forum. The meetings included thematic discussions on FNL, security sector reform, human rights and transitional justice.

III. Regional dimensions

11. At a Summit of the East African Community held in Dar-es-Salaam on 6 April, consensus was reached regarding the admittance of Burundi as a member of the Community. It is anticipated that Burundi will be formally admitted to the Community at the next East African Community Summit, which is scheduled to take place in November.

12. The Tripartite Plus Joint Commission, comprising Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, met in Bujumbura from 20 to 21 April. The African Union, European Union, United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and ONUB attended as observers. The parties agreed to cooperate in denying support to leaders of armed groups destabilizing neighbouring countries. In addition, the Commission decided to request the African Union and the United Nations to impose sanctions against leaders of the armed groups.

13. On 15 April, four technical subcommittees began preparatory work on issues of mutual concern, including the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and FNL activities, refugees and asylum-seekers, and cross-border activities. The sixth meeting of the Burundi-Rwanda Joint Commission subsequently took place on 8 and 9 May. Agreement was reached on strengthening cooperation on border security by combating illegal migration, creating a subcommittee on cross-border movements of persons, and to collaborate on the return of Burundian and Rwandan refugees and returnees to their countries of origin. It was further agreed that the Joint Commission would meet in late June to discuss the settlement of land disputes along the two countries' common border.

IV. Security situation

14. The security situation continued to be destabilized by clashes between FNL and the National Defence Forces (FDN), with rising criminality especially in the western provinces. The high rate of criminality rose further, including following the Government's lifting of the national curfew on 13 April. The curfew for United Nations personnel remains in force. Meanwhile, the movement of persons within the country during night hours has remained for the most part voluntarily restricted. Furthermore, air traffic at night at Bujumbura airport has resumed.

15. Criminal activities included armed robbery, residential theft and sexual violence, with many minors among the victims. A United Nations Security Task Force was convened in May and enhanced residential security measures for United Nations personnel were put in place. The rise in criminality in the country has been attributed to activities allegedly committed by FNL, particularly the looting of livestock and food items. There were also reports of the involvement of former combatants and uncontrolled FDN elements in armed robbery. Criminal activities are increasingly carried out by uniformed elements, reportedly including FDN and the National Police, and gangs.

16. Despite enhanced Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and FDN cooperation, illicit cross-border activities have continued. FDN lacks the capacity to conduct night patrol in border areas. While ONUB patrols are being conducted in the western border region, ONUB has a limited night

surveillance capacity. However, it coordinates with MONUC, which carries out patrols, including with the FARDC along the border area in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Enhanced border security coordination with Rwanda has been facilitated by progress made by the Burundi-Rwanda Joint Commission.

17. The alleged FNL combatants operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are considered to pose a low security threat to Burundi. Meanwhile, in the run-up to the elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there have been increased rumours of cross-border infiltration into the Democratic Republic of the Congo from Burundi, and more recently from Burundi to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Through inter-mission cooperation, both ONUB and MONUC have invalidated many of the rumours, but spoilers to the Democratic Republic of the Congo election process continue to exploit them. However, the volatility of the border between Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular during the forthcoming electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is a primary concern.

V. Consolidation of peace: progress and remaining tasks

Ending the armed conflict

18. The prospects for ending the armed conflict through a negotiated settlement between the Government and FNL gained significant momentum during the reporting period. In a press conference in Dar-es-Salaam, on 11 March, FNL leader, Agathon Rwasa, announced FNL's willingness to negotiate with the Government without preconditions and to cease hostilities. The United Republic of Tanzania subsequently invited the Government of Burundi to undertake discussions with FNL in Dar-es-Salaam.

19. Despite an initial reluctance to enter into talks, the Government subsequently agreed following consultations with members of the Regional Initiative. In May, President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa announced the appointment of the South African Safety and Security Minister, Charles Nqakula, as Facilitator for the talks. Following further preparatory work and consultations carried out by the Facilitator, formal negotiations between the Government and FNL (Rwasa) began in Dar-es-Salaam on 2 June, guided by the national constitution of Burundi.

20. Negotiations took place in two separate commissions: a Military Commission to address the disarmament and demobilization of FNL elements or their integration into the security services; and a Political Commission, to address aspects such as provisional immunity for FNL leadership, refugee returns and resettlement of displaced persons and FNL's participation in national politics. In the presence of President Mbeki and President Kikwete of the United Republic of Tanzania, the Government of Burundi and FNL signed in Dar-es-Salaam on 18 June an Agreement on Principles towards Lasting Peace, Security and Stability in Burundi. The Agreement outlines the principles agreed to between the two sides on political and military aspects. Detailed technical negotiations between the two sides are expected to continue on a comprehensive ceasefire agreement.

21. In the meantime, while there was an increase in alleged FNL criminal activities, the reporting period was marked by a decrease in major FNL attacks against FDN. Armed clashes were largely limited to pursuit and engagement by

FDN in response to reported FNL criminal activities or sightings. Reportedly, there were several mortar attacks and aerial strikes by FDN against FNL in the Kibira and Rukoko Forests and along the border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. FNL combatants are also reportedly operating in Bujumbura Rural, Bujumbura Mairie, Bubanza, Cibitoke and Kayanza provinces. Following a peak in arrests of alleged FNL combatants and collaborators in March, the number of FNL combatants and alleged supporters detained has decreased during the reporting period.

22. On 30 May and 14 June, attacks were carried out by alleged FNL elements, including mortar and gunfire, in the suburbs of Bujumbura. The 30 May attack occurred in the vicinity of the Second Vice-President's residence. One police officer was reportedly killed and four others wounded in that incident, while 14 persons were reportedly injured in the 14 June attack.

23. On 13 April, the Government began to use the former demobilization centre at Randa as a temporary holding facility for captured, arrested or surrendered alleged FNL elements, including minors. ONUB, the World Bank Multi-country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme (MDRP) and donors have informed the Government that international support for the disarmament or demobilization of former FNL combatants could not be provided in the absence of a formal agreement on the issue between the Government and FNL.

Enhancing security: disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, security sector reform, and civilian disarmament

24. Further progress was made in the disarmament and demobilization of FDN members. A total of 20,298 former combatants have been demobilized to date. In April, 588 were demobilized, bringing the current FDN strength to less than 28,000 personnel and another round of demobilization is expected by August. The Government expects the target of a 25,000-strong FDN to be reached by December. In discussions with the World Bank and IMF on budget allocations for the Ministry of Interior and Public Security, the possibility of downsizing the National Police through demobilization was proposed. The Executive Secretariat of the National Commission for Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration, the MDRP Secretariat and donor partners are willing to include Burundi National Police personnel in the demobilization programme, should the Government so request.

25. The disbanding of the *gardiens de la paix* and *militants combattants* militia members also progressed during the reporting period. By 1 June, 26,041 militia elements, 17,378 *gardiens de la paix* and 8,663 *militants combattants*, which is 87 percent of the caseload, had received their "recognition of service" benefits; the process is expected to be concluded by the end of June.

26. The National Programme for Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration continued to provide reinsertion support to demobilized ex-combatants. A recent Executive Secretariat of the National Commission for Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration assessment indicated that assistance had reached 99 per cent of its intended beneficiaries in a timely fashion. The provision of reintegration support has also increased since February. However, the quality of services varies among the 11 national implementation partners.

27. In preparation for the imminent completion of the MDRP-funded Special Project for Demobilization, Reintegration and Recruitment Prevention of Former

Child Combatants, the MDRP secretariat commissioned a survey to assess the situation of project beneficiaries and recommend requisite follow-up actions required. Preliminary findings indicated that the project had helped to reduce the vulnerability of the demobilized former child combatants, most of whom were living with families. Furthermore, the group, including girls, had not encountered major protection problems following their reintegration into communities.

28. There has been limited progress in the area of security sector reform during the reporting period, and the Government recently acknowledged to ONUB and donors the importance of a comprehensive approach to security sector reform for the consolidation of peace and security. The consolidation of FDN and Burundi National Police integration processes requires a comprehensive security sector reform plan that addresses the significant capacity and institution-building requirements of the security services, which continue to lack basic and specialized training, as well as essential equipment, logistics and infrastructure.

29. In the meantime, ONUB continued to train Burundi National Police personnel, including senior officers and corporals. Since March, ONUB has trained 237 police trainers. In June, ONUB also initiated specialized training courses including traffic management and investigations, airport security and prison management.

Small arms proliferation and civilian disarmament

30. On 13 April, the Government launched a civilian disarmament campaign, requiring all weapons in civilian possession to be registered by 5 May for subsequent collection by the Government. President Pierre Nkurunziza, First Vice-President Martin Ndirwumana and Second Vice-President Alice Nzomukunda publicly announced the campaign in three different provinces. The Government extended the final deadline for registration to July, following a limited response from the population. The absence of a clearly defined framework for civilian disarmament prior to the announcement, concerns among the population over weapons registration, and the absence of instructions to the security forces to support the process, resulted in considerable confusion about the initiative and the modalities for its implementation. Subsequently, on 29 April, President Pierre Nkurunziza issued a decree creating a Technical Commission for Civilian Disarmament mandated to implement civilian disarmament and to address the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The President of the Commission will also serve as the National Focal Point for Small Arms and Light Weapons.

31. In March, the national small arms and light weapons focal point organized a seminar, with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) support, to sensitize the Government and civil society on the proliferation of small arms, the Nairobi Declaration on Small Arms and other international agreements. Also with UNDP facilitation, the Association of West European Parliamentarians for Africa collaborated with the Parliament in designing a legislative framework for small arms and light weapons, in particular, a draft bill on firearms regulation in line with the Nairobi Declaration. UNDP and ONUB continue to work with the Government on an overall strategy for the disarmament of the civilian population, within the context of the Government's April initiative.

Refugees and displaced persons

32. The rate of Burundian refugee returns from the United Republic of Tanzania remained significantly below expectations during the reporting period. From January to June, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) assisted 4,840 returnees and provided assistance for an additional 161 spontaneous returnees. Some 50,000 refugees were expected to repatriate in 2006.

33. At a meeting of the Tripartite Commission for the Voluntary Repatriation of Burundian Refugees, comprising Burundi, the United Republic of Tanzania and UNHCR, in Dar es Salaam on 21 March, it was decided to shift support from facilitation to promotion of voluntary returns as of June. That presents particular challenges in the areas of rehabilitation and socio-economic integration. Meanwhile, the security situation and poor socio-economic conditions continue to dissuade refugees from returning. Following a visit to the Burundian refugee camps in the United Republic of Tanzania, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres, and the European Union Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Louis Michel, visited Burundi from 16 to 18 June to review the return process and explore with the Government means of creating favourable conditions for the refugees' return.

34. Regarding the repatriation of Burundians from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a number of FNL elements surrendered voluntarily, mainly to MONUC, while several alleged FNL elements were captured by the FARDC in South Kivu. On 17 April, 51 alleged FNL were forcibly repatriated from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Burundi without first ascertaining their status, thereby raising human rights concerns. All were declared non-combatants by the Burundian authorities. There are also some 22,400 Congolese refugees in Burundi. UNHCR, ONUB and MONUC are coordinating on facilitating the movements of Congolese persons from Burundi to the Democratic Republic of the Congo so that they can participate in the forthcoming elections.

35. During the reporting period, a small number of additional Rwandans sought asylum in Burundi. The number of Rwandan asylum-seekers in Burundi also decreased, with some 68 asylum-seekers obtaining refugee status, while rejected applicants were advised about the return procedures. By mid-May, UNHCR and its partners had facilitated the return of 1,805 Rwandans. It is estimated that 19,311 Rwandan asylum-seekers currently remain in Burundi.

Respect for human rights

36. Since my last report, there has been an overall reduction in the number of reported human rights abuses in Burundi. However, serious human rights violations have continued, mainly in the western provinces. ONUB received reports of summary executions, torture, ill-treatment, rape, arbitrary arrests and detentions or disappearances, and extortion and pillaging attributed to FDN, Burundi National Police and Service National de Renseignements. Victims continued to be targeted in the context of the pursuit of FNL and were often accused of FNL membership or collaboration. No prosecutions were reported, although investigations were initiated in some cases. ONUB continued efforts to combat impunity concerning human rights abuses and called upon the national authorities to fully investigate allegations and to systematically sanction perpetrators.

37. On 29 March, President Nkurunziza met with Service National de Renseignements personnel and reprimanded those responsible for the ill-treatment and torture of detainees. The meeting led to several positive developments, including a commitment to stop the use of an Service National de Renseignements facility as a detention centre. The Administrator of Service National de Renseignements also requested that ONUB provide human rights training for intelligence officers, which began in May. However, human rights observers continued to be denied access to detainees held by Service National de Renseignements. In addition, FNL was implicated in incidents of targeted killings, mutilation, abduction, extortion and pillaging.

38. A high incidence of sexual violence was reported countrywide, many cases of which involved minors. In comparison to previous reporting periods, more victims were reported to be filing complaints, obtaining urgent medical assistance, and received briefings on their legal rights. Those positive developments can be attributed to increased sensitization of the population on issues related to sexual violence. ONUB is working with the Government to combat the problem of sexual violence, including the introduction of tougher penalties for offenders.

39. A child protection network has been established with support from ONUB and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to monitor and report on human rights violations committed against children in armed conflict. During the reporting period, there were 129 confirmed violations of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), which included 17 incidents of killing and maiming, 77 abductions and detentions (including 53 minors who were reported to be detained in police stations and prisons on suspicion of FNL membership), 51 cases of recruitment and 7 instances of sexual violence. In addition, 291 cases of child rights violations were confirmed by ONUB. Those violations included 89 cases of sexual violence against female minors, with 25 involving girls under the age of seven. Verifications indicated that FDN soldiers were the perpetrators in seven of those cases.

Transitional justice

40. In March, a mission led by the United Nations Legal Counsel, Nicolas Michel, comprising representatives of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs, visited Burundi to consult with the Government and other stakeholders, including religious leaders, political parties and international and national non-governmental organizations on the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and a Special Tribunal. The mission discussed key issues, including the legal framework of those mechanisms, as well as recommendations made by the Government in a working paper provided to the mission. Subsequently, a letter from the United Nations Legal Counsel was transmitted to the Government outlining the key issues arising from the consultations, including the principle of no immunity or amnesty for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes and the need for neutrality and independence of the two bodies. A response from the Government is awaited before negotiations between the United Nations and the Government proceed further.

Justice sector reform

41. The Government made progress in the development of a justice sector reform policy and requested United Nations support in developing an implementation strategy. The policy is due to be completed and presented to the international community, once the justice sector component of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper has been finalized and alignment between the two documents is ensured. In the meantime, the recent appointment of senior magistrates and other senior judicial officials notwithstanding, the judicial system in Burundi remains fragile, and unable to carry out its functions in a credible, independent manner. Critically needed reforms include addressing the ethnic balance, enhancing the judiciary's independence, and developing a cadre of qualified and judicial workers.

Humanitarian situation

42. Food insecurity continued to be a major humanitarian challenge due to poor harvests in 2005 and 2006. Throughout the reporting period, the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other humanitarian partners distributed assistance to 2.2 million Burundians, including seeds and tools to increase the prospects for an improved harvest in June. Nutritional surveys indicated that the overall situation had not deteriorated compared to 2005; however, an estimated 68 per cent of the population were food insecure and therefore vulnerable to even a minimal deterioration in economic or climatic conditions.

43. Sufficient rainfall has improved prospects for the mid-year harvests in June and July, although storms destroyed crops in all provinces and rendered some sections of the population more vulnerable to food insecurity. While the Government conducted food collection and distribution programmes as part of its national solidarity efforts, a high level of international food assistance remained indispensable. WFP is expected to distribute an additional 42,000 metric tons of food by December. Improving food security remains a priority.

44. On 29 May, the United Nations system reviewed the Common Humanitarian Action Plan, which is part of the Consolidated Appeals Process. The active involvement of the National Committee for Aid Coordination improved links and synergies between Consolidated Appeals Process and the Government's Emergency Programme.

45. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) continued to work on the Inter-Agency Contingency Plan. Preparations for key scenarios included the possible influx of Congolese refugees during the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the prospect of a massive return of Burundian refugees from the United Republic of Tanzania following the shift from facilitation to promotion of voluntary repatriation, and continued food insecurity in large areas of the country.

Socio-economic development

46. On 30 April, President Nkurunziza announced several measures aimed at improving the living conditions for the population, including free maternity care in public hospitals and free health care for children under five years old and a 15 per cent salary increase for all civil servants. Civil society, national media and

international partners expressed concerns about raising public expectations, given current difficulties in planning and lack of funding to implement some of those measures.

47. The Government also made progress towards the completion of its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. The Permanent Secretariat for Economic and Social Reforms, with support from the World Bank and the United Nations, organized a workshop from 29 to 31 May, at which it was agreed that the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper should include the following priority issues: security, justice, human rights, land issues, good governance and equitable access to resources by the population. After a second round of national consultations on the revised draft of Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, it is expected to be submitted to the boards of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for review and endorsement by September, which would enable Burundi to benefit fully from the Enhanced Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) debt relief initiative.

48. In the meantime, the Government remains reliant upon the 2006 Emergency Programme funding allocated during the donor conference, held in February in Bujumbura, pending contributions arising from a Round Table Donors Conference, to be held by early 2007 for full Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper financing. It is expected that the Emergency Programme will be funded through budget support, a trust fund, and the reallocation of existing financial commitments. Of the approximately $150 million in confirmed pledges, $25.4 million in direct budgetary support from the World Bank, the Netherlands, France and Belgium, has been included in the 2006 national budget. In addition, a number of bilateral donors have confirmed their commitment to contribute to the Emergency Programme through a trust fund managed by UNDP.

49. The National Committee for Aid Coordination, with support from UNDP, has made progress in coordinating the Government's Emergency Programme and in preparing for implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. However, the capacity of the National Committee needs to be strengthened so that it can more effectively play its donor coordination role. In that regard, mechanisms to improve coordination within the international community and between the Government and donors were identified during a donor retreat held in Bujumbura on 14 March. Those recommendations are currently being discussed with the National Committee.

50. With regard to the fiscal framework, the 2006 budget projected an increase of 42 per cent for government revenues and an increase in expenditures of approximately 29 per cent, compared to the 2005 budget. The financial gap was projected at $24.6 million, principally due to an increase in social sector expenditure. Following recent discussions between Burundi and the international financial institutions, a preliminary agreement was reached to address the current budget deficits through a range of corrective measures, including increased donor support and a revision of expenditures. Final approval is pending on an amendment to the draft law governing the budget for 2006-2007.

51. The need for external financing remains significant. Estimated at $313.2 million in 2006, the funding would be met through project disbursements ($137.2 million), HIPC relief ($35.7 million), IMF disbursement ($31.7 million) and programme financing ($108.7). Projected programme financing by major donors in 2006 includes international development assistance ($60 million of the proposed

Economic Reform Support Grant), the African Development Bank ($16.3 million), European Union ($17 million) and bilateral donors ($15.4 million).

Land issues

52. Progress on land issues was made with the establishment of the National Commission on Land and Property. The Government has also reiterated its intention to reform national law to guarantee land inheritance rights for women. If the Government is to effectively address land conflicts and shortages, the National Commission on Land and Property should be established with sufficient resources, credibility and empowerment. It will also be essential that judicial reform prioritize land conflict-related issues, and that economic and rural development programmes take land shortages into consideration, including a greater emphasis on non-agricultural livelihoods, urbanization and industrial collectives.

Mines and explosive remnants of war

53. In May, the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action conducted a general community survey on mines and explosive remnants of war. The foundation has provided the necessary data for planning and implementing clearance operations and emergency recovery and development programmes. As of 15 June, 57 spot explosive ordnance disposal tasks had been completed in rural areas by Dan Church Aid, accounting for the clearance of 40 per cent of the agricultural land along the Tanzanian border. In addition, ONUB has provided mine risk education to some 25,000 beneficiaries, mainly in the mine-affected southern provinces. Despite progress, some 5 per cent of the population still live in affected areas.

54. As part of the transfer of all regulatory and coordination responsibility for mine action activities from ONUB to the Government, two presidential decrees on mine action for the establishment of the National Humanitarian Mine Action Steering Committee and the National Humanitarian Mine Action Coordination Centre were discussed by the Council of Ministers. It was decided that a law would be drafted to provide the framework for the national civilian protection structure by December.

VI. Inter-mission Cooperation

55. A concerted effort has been made to streamline cooperation and liaison between MONUC and ONUB. In addition to regular meetings, informal contacts between both missions have been regularized to address issues of mutual concern, including the temporary redeployment of ONUB military personnel to MONUC, the monitoring of the repatriation of alleged Burundian former combatants from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the establishment of communication channels between FARDC and FDN.

56. Information sharing on political and security developments affecting the border between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, as well as MONUC and ONUB military operations, is also ongoing. Additionally, the ONUB Radio and Television Unit has developed close contacts with MONUC's Radio Okapi to improve reporting on the region. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1669 (2006), as of 15 June, 45 ONUB military observers have been temporarily redeployed to MONUC.

VII. ONUB drawdown

57. The ONUB military drawdown has continued as scheduled. In April, an engineering company, a military hospital and an aviation unit were repatriated. As of 31 March, the ONUB police component stood at 15 officers based in Bujumbura to support the training of the National Police. As at 15 June, the ONUB military strength on the ground stood at 3,516. In addition, one battalion and a medical hospital are currently being deployed to MONUC, under ONUB's troop strength. Accordingly, a total of 4,432 military personnel will be serving with ONUB and MONUC, under ONUB's troop strength. Transfer of some of ONUB's assets to the national authorities and institutions should be explored as part of future United Nations support to the peace consolidation process.

VIII. Future United Nations support to Burundi

58. In my last report, I outlined a number of outstanding major security, social, humanitarian, and development challenges that required sustained attention from the Government and international partners. In view of the Government's request that ONUB complete its mandate by 31 December, I indicated that the United Nations presence in Burundi would need to be restructured and reinforced to ensure optimal support to the peace consolidation process.

59. In a letter addressed to me on 13 April, President Nkurunziza requested that the United Nations system in Burundi be restructured by January 2007 to support the country's reconstruction and development priorities. Subsequently, in a note verbale dated 28 April, the Government expressed its preference for a United Nations integrated office structure which would provide support in addressing the specific needs of Burundi. At the request of the Government, a joint United Nations-Government of Burundi technical team travelled to Freetown from 12 to 19 May to familiarize itself with the operations of the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL). The technical team met with my Executive Representative for Sierra Leone, officials of the Government of Sierra Leone, the staff of UNIOSIL, the United Nations Country Team and diplomatic representatives in Freetown.

60. Following careful consideration of the situation in Burundi, I requested Assistant Secretary-General Gilbert Houngbo, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Regional Director, to consult with the Government on its priorities and on the support it would require from the United Nations. Mr. Houngbo led a mission to Burundi from 21 to 25 May, which comprised representatives from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and OHCHR, and worked closely with ONUB and the United Nations Country Team. The mission met with President Nkurunziza; the two Vice-Presidents; high-level government officials; and diplomatic and donor representatives.

61. During the visit, a common understanding was reached on the need for United Nations support to focus, in the next phase, on reconstruction and socio-economic development, as well as national capacity-building in all sectors to help to ensure that the progress made in the Burundi peace process is sustained, and that the population benefits from the dividends of peace. While reiterating the Government's request for the withdrawal of ONUB to be completed by 31 December, the Burundian officials also raised with the mission the issue of the many peace

consolidation challenges and the need for longer-term United Nations support, including in the areas of democratic governance, security sector reform, human rights, transitional justice, justice sector reform, reconstruction, socio-economic development and humanitarian assistance.

62. Accordingly, an agreement was reached on 24 May under which the Government confirmed its request for the establishment of a United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi, following the termination of ONUB's mandate. As agreed with the Government, the priority areas requiring United Nations assistance are: (a) peace consolidation and democratic governance; (b) security sector reform and civilian disarmament; (c) human rights, judicial sector reform and transitional justice; (d) information and communications; and (e) reconstruction and socio-economic development.

Recommendations

63. In line with the Government's formal request, I would like to recommend that the withdrawal of ONUB be followed by the establishment of a small United Nations integrated office in Burundi, to be known as BINUB (Bureau Intégré des Nations Unies au Burundi), for an initial period of 12 months, commencing on 1 January 2007. The humanitarian and development activities of the United Nations Country Team would be consolidated under the integrated office, while reinforcing efforts in the areas, currently being undertaken by ONUB. Those areas would require continued United Nations support following the withdrawal of the mission, within the overall peace consolidation process.

64. Should the Security Council approve this recommendation, I propose the mandate of the integrated office include support to the Government in the following areas:

(a) Strengthening the capacity of national institutions to address the root causes of conflict, particularly through reforms in the areas of political, administrative and economic governance; enhancing the capacity of the legislative branch and of civil society; increasing the transparency and accountability of public administration; combating corruption; and the prevention and management of internal conflicts, including land issues;

(b) Developing a comprehensive security sector reform plan and providing technical assistance for its implementation, including through the training and mentoring of Burundi National Police; provision of technical assistance for the professionalization of the national army, in coordination with international partners; and combating the proliferation of small and light weapons;

(c) Completing the ongoing national programme for the demobilization and reintegration of former combatants;

(d) Facilitating the reintegration of returnees and internally displaced persons into their communities;

(e) Establishing a national human rights commission; ensuring the protection and promotion of human rights, particularly the rights of women, children and other vulnerable persons; and establishing transitional justice mechanisms;

(f) Ensuring the independence of and strengthening the capacity of the judiciary to provide equitable access to justice, and building the capacity of the corrections system;

(g) Promoting freedom of the press and strengthening capacities of the media, including through training and development of a legal framework for media and communications;

(h) Promoting and facilitating economic growth and poverty reduction, with emphasis on rural development, urbanization, stimulation of the private sector, and the creation of economic opportunities for youth and vulnerable groups; strengthening national mine action capacity; combating HIV/AIDS; and improving the quality and access to basic services;

(i) Ensuring environmental protection and the prevention and management of natural catastrophes, including food security; and

(j) Resource mobilization for the implementation of emergency and priority programmes, and longer-term activities to be carried out within the framework of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper; and strengthening donor coordination.

65. It is proposed that the integrated office would be headed by an Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, who would also serve as the United Nations Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator, UNDP Resident Representative and Designated Official for Security. The Executive Representative would lead all United Nations activities in Burundi and would be responsible for ensuring that all United Nations components in the country pursue a coordinated and coherent approach in supporting the peace.

66. On the basis of the areas of support identified, the United Nations system is currently developing a common action plan to ensure a streamlined, coherent and integrated approach in United Nations activities in Burundi. It will be broadly in line with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and will subsequently be reflected in a revised United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Burundi. The plan also identifies benchmarks for achievement and completion of tasks to be undertaken in the various integrated programmes under the framework of the Integrated Office, together with estimated time frames.

67. In order to ensure national ownership and full transparency, the plan is expected to be finalized after consultations between the United Nations and the Government in early July.

68. Should the Council approve my proposal for the establishment of the United Nations integrated office in Burundi, it would be my intention to seek resources for its funding from the General Assembly.

IX. Financial aspects

69. Pending consideration by the Security Council of my proposals on future United Nations support to Burundi, I have requested the General Assembly to authorize me to enter into commitments to provide for the financing of ONUB for the period from 1 July to 31 October 2006 in the amount of some $79.2 million. The budget for the period from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007, including the administrative

liquidation of ONUB, will be submitted to the Assembly during the main part of its sixty-first session.

70. As at 31 March 2006, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for ONUB amounted to $91.3 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at that date amounted to $1,437.6 million.

71. Reimbursement of troop and contingent-owned equipment costs has been made for the period up to 31 October 2005 and 30 September 2005, respectively, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule, with the next payment scheduled for the end of June 2006.

X. Observations

72. The Government of Burundi has continued to make progress towards the consolidation of peace, including through further steps towards institution-building. Furthermore, the Government has worked with donors and the international financial institutions to align funding priorities and chart a path towards medium- and long-term socio-economic development and the adequate delivery of basic social services.

73. The Government has also taken concrete steps to peacefully end the 13-year conflict. I welcome both FNL's decision to negotiate without preconditions and the Government's decision to engage in talks with the armed group. I would also like to express my appreciation to the Regional Peace Initiative for Burundi and the South African Facilitator, whose tireless efforts continue to be instrumental in moving the peace process forward. The signing on 18 June of the Agreement of Principles towards Lasting Peace, Security, and Stability in Burundi is an important step in the right direction. The Government and FNL, supported by regional and international partners of Burundi, need to build on that momentum and ensure that a comprehensive agreement is concluded with minimum delay. The United Nations will continue to play a supporting role and to provide the necessary technical assistance to the process. The United Nations also stands ready to give due consideration to any request by the Government to assist in the implementation of such an agreement, including regarding its ceasefire arrangements, within available capacity, and taking into consideration the Government's request for ONUB to withdraw by 31 December 2006.

74. Despite the progress made, the political and security situation in Burundi remains fragile and requires the sustained engagement of the country's international partners. In that regard, I am concerned by the increasing national and international criticism directed at the Government's approach towards opposition political parties and the media. I urge President Nkurunziza, as the head of the first post-conflict Government in Burundi, to take steps towards addressing those concerns, including through pressing ahead on the path of reforms to ensure an inclusive and transparent approach to the political decision-making process within the framework of the Constitution and national laws. I also call on the Government to uphold freedom of expression, remain open to dialogue with civil society, political parties, and other stakeholders so that measures aimed at administrative and governance reform, stemming corruption, and strengthening the rule of law can be supported by all concerned.

75. In order to ensure long-term stability, progress needs to be urgently made in the area of security sector reform. The FDN needs to be transformed into a well-

trained, adequately equipped, and professional army under civilian control, capable of carrying out its responsibility of ensuring the external security of the country. In turn, Burundi National Police should be provided with the necessary resources and training to enable it to credibly assume all internal security responsibilities. Progress towards enhancing the capacity of the army and police is urgently required in order to minimize any security vacuum following the departure, at the Government's request, of the ONUB military contingents in December.

76. While largely linked to the conflict with FNL, the serious human rights violations that continue to be committed by the security forces, including the intelligence services, remain a matter of concern. The national authorities need to continue their efforts to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice. The strengthening and professionalization of the security services should be approached through a comprehensive strategy for Security Sector Reform, supported by bilateral and international partners, and closely linked to an effective reform of the judicial and corrections systems.

77. Burundi also continues to face a number of humanitarian, development, and socio-economic challenges. Public expectations for immediate peace dividends are high, and the Government's delivery capacity remains severely constrained despite its will and efforts towards mobilizing resources for reconstruction and development. Concerted international support is needed to meet the immediate priority needs, including addressing food insecurity as well as facilitating the safe return and effective reintegration of displaced populations. Meanwhile, considerable funding and resources will be needed to strengthen national capacity-building, the promotion of rural development and other longer-terms programmes. In that regard, Burundi would also benefit from early consideration by the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission.

78. I welcome the agreement between the Government and the United Nations on the priority peace consolidation areas that will require continued United Nations support. I encourage the Security Council to give due consideration to my recommendation to establish a United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi, as outlined in section VIII of the present report. The establishment of the proposed office would signal a shift in the focus of United Nations engagement in the country to reflect the positive developments in the peace process. At the same time, it would help to ensure that the international community's significant investment in that process is safeguarded through an adequate level of the Organization's support for the Government's peace consolidation effort.

79. Should the Council authorize the establishment of the Integrated Office, I intend to revert with details on its structure, requisite resources, and progress towards its establishment in an addendum to the present report, taking into consideration existing United Nations Country Team capacities and any additional tasks that may need to be implemented by the United Nations, in support of an agreement between the Government and FNL. In the meantime, I would like to recommend a final extension of ONUB's mandate until 31 December 2006.

80. In conclusion, I would like to express my appreciation for my acting Special Representative for Burundi, Nureldin Satti, and all ONUB personnel for their continued and hard work for the cause of peace in Burundi. My appreciation also goes to all United Nations staff, non-governmental organizations and the bilateral and multilateral donors for their generous contributions to peace consolidation efforts in that country.